



July 27, 2004

## **The Iranian Paradox: Strategic Threat, Democratic Hope**

### *Executive Summary*

- Iran represents both a source of great danger and a reason for great hope in the Middle East. Few regimes threaten global security as gravely as Iran's, but few regimes hold power so precariously.
- Iran's clerical leaders support international terrorism and are actively, rapidly attempting to develop robust weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missile programs, but they govern a people that are becoming increasingly vocal in opposition to their rule.
- The Central Intelligence Agency has reported that Iran continues to stockpile chemical and biological weapons, and seeks production technology, training, and expertise that could further its efforts to achieve an indigenous capability to produce nerve agents.
- To force Iran to abide by commitments it has made under the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and assurances made to the International Atomic Energy Agency, the United States and its allies should pursue a number of policy options, including:
  - Seeking a U.N. Security Council resolution formally condemning Iran's destabilizing noncompliance;
  - Employing the Proliferation Security Initiative to interdict nuclear weapons and ballistic missile components destined for Iran; and
  - In conjunction with the European Union and Japan, should consider levying – and enforcing – multilateral sanctions against Iran.
- The U.S. should increase and improve television and radio programming (through the International Broadcasting Bureau) to Iran as well as work with its allies to ensure that the policy of “constructive engagement” with Iran is conducive to promoting democracy and to getting Tehran to cease its human rights abuses, nuclear violations, and terrorism sponsorship.
- Responsible members of the international community must not wait for the threat of Iran's WMD programs to mature before trying to stop it. The U.S., in partnership with its allies and others, must neutralize this threat while it is still emerging and demand transparency and accountability from Iran. The risks to international peace and security are too great to act otherwise.

## Introduction

Today, Iran represents both a source of great danger and a reason for great hope in the Middle East. Few regimes threaten global peace and security as gravely as Iran's, but few regimes hold power so precariously. As this paper will detail, Iran's clerical leaders support international terrorism and are actively, rapidly attempting to develop robust weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and ballistic missile programs, but they govern a people that are becoming increasingly vocal in opposition to their rule. Beginning in the mid-1990s, with the election of President Muhammad Khatami, Iranians began to show tremendous support for reformist politicians promising economic and political liberalization. Although the unelected, hard-line Council of Guardians has vetoed many liberal reforms, such moves have surely stoked the opposition of a well-educated people plagued by 15.4-percent unemployment.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, most Iranians have no or almost no memory of the 1979 Iranian Revolution, which toppled the Shah and brought the current regime to power—two-thirds of Iran's 70 million citizens are under the age of 30, and half are under the age of 20.<sup>2</sup> These circumstances suggest that unless Iran's clerical regime reverses course and begins to grant greater reforms, a wave of democratic opposition could sweep it from power.

In the meantime, however, the regime will do its best to strengthen its position domestically as well as internationally. Wary of reformists' momentum, Iran's regime has worked actively to suppress democracy and human rights. In its foreign policy, Iran has continued to sidestep international opposition and to support terrorism and pursue WMD — chemical, biological, and quite likely nuclear weapons. In addition, with the uncertain political future of neighboring Iraq, Iran has attempted to gain influence there (and throughout the entire region), both by building ties to mainstream politicians and, according to some accounts, by supporting anti-coalition insurgents. In short, Iran has continued to pursue (without abatement) domestic and foreign policies that challenge American values and interests and menace global peace and security.

## Iran: Nearly Nuclear

Under pressure from the Bush Administration, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the U.N.'s nuclear watchdog agency, began inspecting Iran's nuclear sites in early 2003, shortly after an exiled opposition group revealed the existence of secret nuclear facilities at Natanz and Arak. Since then, Iran has repeatedly demonstrated its determination to undermine and evade the inspections regime. It has provided incomplete, misleading reports on its nuclear program to the IAEA, it interfered with the IAEA's ability to conduct prompt inspections, and it continues to develop nuclear capabilities in spite of repeated promises to curtail or halt such activities. In short, Iran seems determined to continue to shroud its nuclear program in secrecy. As Undersecretary of State John Bolton said, "The longstanding, massive, and covert Iranian effort to acquire sensitive nuclear capabilities makes sense only as part of a nuclear weapons program."<sup>3</sup>

In June 2003, the IAEA Board of Governors adopted a resolution calling on Iran to answer two unresolved questions "that are key to understanding the extent and nature of Iran's enrichment

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<sup>1</sup> CIA World Factbook 2004, "Iran."

<sup>2</sup> *Economist.com*, "Countdown to counter-revolution," January 15, 2004.

<sup>3</sup> Undersecretary of State John Bolton, "Nuclear weapons and rogue states: challenge and response." Remarks to the Conference of the Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis and the Fletcher School's International Security Studies Program, December 2, 2003.

program: the source of all HEU [highly enriched uranium] contamination in Iran and the extent and nature of work undertaken on the basis of the P-2 advanced centrifuge design.”<sup>4</sup> The IAEA’s struggle to resolve these issues is key to understanding the extent and nature of Iran’s obstruction of the inspections.

During inspections in the course of 2003, IAEA inspectors discovered particles of HEU, as well as of natural uranium (LEU), at Natanz and at the Kalaye Electric Company. This contamination cast doubt on Iran’s claim that it had not enriched any uranium, but Iran blamed the contamination on imported centrifuge components. Tests of those particle samples, however, have discredited Iran’s explanation for the contamination. First, the contamination on imported components differs from the contamination on domestically manufactured components. This discrepancy is inconsistent with Iran’s claim that imported components from Pakistan are entirely responsible for the domestic components’ contamination. Also inconsistent with this claim is the IAEA’s discovery that the contamination at Natanz differs from the contamination at Kalaye. Finally, the contamination at Kalaye consisted predominantly of uranium enriched to 36 percent, yet tests found only “negligible traces” of 36-percent enriched uranium on imported centrifuge components.<sup>5</sup> Iran has yet to resolve these discrepancies between its story and the IAEA’s findings.

A similar pattern of deceit-discovery-deceit characterizes Iran’s attempts to conceal its development of second-generation (P-2) centrifuges, which can enrich uranium much faster than their first-generation predecessors. In an October letter to the IAEA that Iran said provided “the full range of Iranian nuclear activities,”<sup>6</sup> Iran did not mention that it possessed design drawings of P-2 centrifuges and had conducted some preliminary tests related to their development. Iran disclosed this information only after the IAEA challenged its omission from the October letter, but even then Iran claimed that it had produced all P-2 components domestically.<sup>7</sup> Subsequently, however, Iran reversed this claim as well, acknowledging that it had indeed imported some components from Asian suppliers.<sup>8</sup>

Iranian officials also have interfered with the IAEA’s ability to conduct inspections effectively. Last June, the IAEA said, “Overall . . . Iran’s cooperation has not been as full, timely, and proactive as it should have been,” and, in particular, the IAEA criticized Iran’s postponement until mid-April 2004 of inspections scheduled for mid-March.<sup>9</sup> This delay disqualified environmental samples collected during the inspections from being included in the IAEA’s June report.<sup>10</sup> Because they affected inspections of sites involved in Iran’s more secretive P-2 centrifuge-enrichment program, the delays potentially prevented inspectors from learning valuable information about a critical part of Iran’s nuclear program.

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<sup>4</sup> Resolution adopted by the IAEA Board of Governors, “Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement in the Islamic Republic of Iran,” June 18, 2004.

<sup>5</sup> Report by the IAEA Director General, “Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement in the Islamic Republic of Iran,” February 24, 2004.

<sup>6</sup> IAEA, February 24, 2004.

<sup>7</sup> IAEA, February 24, 2004.

<sup>8</sup> “Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement in the Islamic Republic of Iran.” Report by the IAEA Director General, June 1, 2004.

<sup>9</sup> IAEA, June 18, 2004.

<sup>10</sup> Undersecretary of State John Bolton. “Hearing of the Middle East and Central Asia Subcommittee of the House International Relations Committee,” *Federal News Service*, June 24, 2004.

The final component of Iran's strategy to thwart the inspections regime is its frequent pledges to suspend elements of its nuclear program. These pledges create the illusion of cooperation, even though Iran reneges on or violates many of them. For example, last November, Iran voluntarily promised "to suspend all uranium enrichment and reprocessing activities,"<sup>11</sup> but it has recently announced plans to conduct tests at a uranium conversion facility (UCF) using nuclear material. Although the IAEA has informed Iran that the planned tests would violate its pledge to suspend enrichment activities, Iran dubiously maintains that its pledge does not prohibit such tests.<sup>12</sup> Iran also seems to be reversing course on a February pledge to suspend the assembly and testing of centrifuges. As the IAEA's June resolution notes, Iran is withholding 10 assembled centrifuge rotors for "research activities."<sup>13</sup> Viewed in conjunction with Iran's clear history of deception and obstruction, Iran's loose adherence to its pledges impugns its credibility as a good-faith partner of the IAEA and international community.

Of course, Iran's dishonesty should surprise no one, for it has no justification for a peaceful nuclear power program. Financially, it makes no sense for Iran to invest heavily in nuclear power given its tremendous oil and natural gas reserves and scarce natural uranium reserves. In fact, experts estimate that every year, Iran burns off enough natural gas to generate electricity equivalent to the output of four nuclear reactors like the one Iran is building in the city of Bushehr. Iran's mines cannot provide enough uranium for even one reactor over its lifetime; moreover, the enrichment facilities that Iran is developing will provide far more reactor fuel than is needed by the one reactor that will be operational in Iran within the next decade. As Undersecretary Bolton put it, "We are being asked to believe that Iran is building uranium enrichment capacity to make fuel for reactors that do not exist from uranium ore that Iran does not have."<sup>14</sup>

As the nuclear power explanation for Iran's nuclear program loses credibility, the nuclear weapons explanation gains credibility. Indeed, Iran's indigenous uranium can supply the fissile material for several nuclear weapons, and Iran is about to start building a heavy-water reactor that is ideal for plutonium production but too small for power generation.<sup>15</sup> Most damning of all, perhaps, is that Iran kept much of its nuclear program secret for 18 years, a needless measure if the country were indeed pursuing the peaceful goal of power generation, which is allowed under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Iran's secrecy, combined with its continued attempts to undermine IAEA inspections, strongly suggest that sinister motives drive its nuclear program.

## **Iran's Chemical Weapons Development**

The United States believes Iran has a covert program to develop and stockpile chemical weapons. The Central Intelligence Agency reported in its recent *Report to Congress on the Acquisition of Technology Relating to Weapons of Mass Destruction and Advanced Conventional Munitions*, also known as the "721 Report," that Iran continues to seek production technology, training, and expertise that could further its efforts to achieve an indigenous capability to produce nerve agents. A forthcoming edition of the 721 Report is expected to state that "Iran may have already stockpiled

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<sup>11</sup> "Statement by the Iranian Government and EU Foreign Ministers," October 21, 2003.

<sup>12</sup> IAEA, June 1, 2004.

<sup>13</sup> IAEA, June 18, 2004.

<sup>14</sup> Bolton, June 24, 2004.

<sup>15</sup> *The Economist*, "Testing Times," June 12, 2004.

blister, blood, choking, and nerve agents — and the bombs and artillery shells to deliver them—which it previously had manufactured.”

Iran, however, is a party to the Chemical Weapons Convention (“CWC”), which has a simple central obligation: no stockpiling, no development, no production, and no use of chemical weapons. The overwhelming majority of States Parties abide by this obligation. Iran is not, and the Bush Administration has made this abundantly clear to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. The problem, of course, is that as with so many of the so-called arms control treaties, the CWC is not effectively verifiable or enforceable.

## **Iran’s Biological Weapons Development**

The Central Intelligence Agency stated in its recent 721 Report, “Tehran probably maintains an offensive BW program. Iran continued to seek dual-use biotechnical materials, equipment, and expertise. While such materials had legitimate uses, Iran’s biological warfare (BW) program also could have benefited from them. It is likely that Iran has capabilities to produce small quantities of BW agents, but has a limited ability to weaponize them.”<sup>16</sup> Because BW programs are easily concealed, it is difficult for the United States to prove beyond all doubt that Iran has an offensive BW program.

Again, however, Iran is a party to the Biological Weapons Convention (“BWC”) and the 1925 Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or Other Gases, and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare. Like the CWC, the central obligation of the BWC is simple: no possession, no development, no production, and, together with the 1925 Protocol, no use of biological weapons. And like the CWC, it is not effectively enforceable. The overwhelming majority of States Parties abide by these obligations, but the Bush administration believes Iran is not abiding by its BWC obligations, and has made this abundantly clear to the parties of this treaty.

## **Ballistic Missiles**

Iran continues its extensive efforts to develop the means to deliver weapons of mass destruction. Thanks to assistance from entities – including government-owned entities – in Russia and China, Iran is developing a variety of liquid-propellant and solid-propellant ballistic missiles. North Korea is one of the main suppliers of ballistic missiles, missile equipment, and production technology to Iran. North Korea provided Iran with the technology to produce the SCUD B (300 km range) and SCUD C (500 km range) missiles.

Iran’s ballistic missile inventory is among the largest in the Middle East and includes some 1,300-km-range Shahab-3 medium-range ballistic missiles (MRBMs) — which are based on the North Korean No Dong missile — and a few hundred short-range ballistic missiles (SRBMs), including the Shahab-1 (Scud-B), Shahab-2 (Scud C), and Tondar-69 (CSS-8) as well as a new solid-propellant SRBM, the Fateh-110. The 1,300-km-range Shahab-3 missile is a direct threat to Israel, Turkey, U.S. forces in the region, and U.S. friends and allies.

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<sup>16</sup> CIA, “Unclassified Report to Congress on the Acquisition of Technology Relating to Weapons of Mass Destruction and Advanced Conventional Munitions: 1 January through 30 June 2003.”

In addition, the Bush Administration believes Iran has programs to develop longer-range missiles that will be able to strike additional targets throughout the region and that will allow Iran to deploy missiles against Israel from locations further within Iranian territory. Iran is also likely to develop IRBMs or ICBMs capable of delivering payloads to Western Europe or the United States. In short, Iran is acquiring the means to produce indigenously ever-more sophisticated and longer-range missiles. Iran's development of an indigenous missile production capability will make it significantly harder for the United States to stem Iran's missile development by slowing the international missile technology trade, on which Iran has long relied. Yet, even as Iran moves towards indigenous missile production capability, the United States should continue its efforts to halt the flow of foreign technology and expertise to Iran.

## **Iran's Support for Terrorism**

On July 22, 2004, the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States released its findings on the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks. While the 9/11 Commission found no evidence that Iran was "aware of planning for" the terrorist attacks on U.S. soil, the Commission did find that there was "strong evidence that Iran facilitated the transit of Al Qaeda members into and out of Afghanistan before 9/11, and that some of these were future September 11th hijackers."<sup>17</sup> The report also found that after September 11th, Iran and the Iranian-backed terrorist group Hezbollah "wished to conceal any past evidence of cooperation with Sunni terrorists associated with Al Qaeda."<sup>18</sup> The Commission stated that Iran and Hezbollah's involvement, however, "requires further investigation by the U.S. government."<sup>19</sup>

When President Bush named Iran as a member of the "axis of evil" in January 2002, he cited not only its pursuit of WMD but its support for terrorism as well. The hard-line Iranian regime has closely allied itself with anti-Western, anti-Israel terrorist groups since coming to power 25 years ago. For years, Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and Ministry of Intelligence and Security have planned and supported terrorist acts and have provided funding, safe haven, training, and weapons to groups like Hezbollah, Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and the Popular Liberation Front for Palestine-General Command.<sup>20</sup> More recently, since U.S.-led campaigns deprived al Qaeda and Ansar al-Islam of havens in Afghanistan and Iraq, respectively, senior operatives from these terrorist organizations, including Osama bin Laden's son, Saad, have found refuge in Iran. From there, with the protection of the Jerusalem Force, an elite unit of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps controlled by Iran's clerics, Al Qaeda leaders organized a resurgence of terrorism in May 2003, orchestrating bombings within days of one another in Riyadh and Casablanca that together killed 80 people.<sup>21</sup> Although the Iranian government claimed that July to have those leaders in custody, it has yet to try them or to extradite them to their countries of origin, and some reports allege that powerful Iranian hardliners want to protect and support Al Qaeda.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, "The 9/11 Commission Report," July 22, 2004.

<sup>18</sup> National Commission, July 22, 2004.

<sup>19</sup> National Commission, July 22, 2004.

<sup>20</sup> Paula A DeSutter, Assistant Secretary of State for Verification and Compliance, "Testimony Before the U.S.-Israeli Joint Parliamentary Committee," September 17, 2003.

<sup>21</sup> *Washington Post*, "Bin Laden Son Plays Key Role in Al Qaeda," October 14, 2003.

<sup>22</sup> Congressional Research Service (CRS), "Iran: U.S. Concerns and Policy Responses," June 8, 2004.

Clearly, terrorism is a deeply rooted feature of the current Iranian regime — an essential element of its strategy to confront the United States and Israel, which Iran’s Islamic revolutionary leader, Ayatollah Ruhallah Khomeini, branded “Great Satan” and “Little Satan,” respectively. However, unlike the situation in much of the Muslim world, the Iranian regime’s sponsorship of terrorism may enjoy little public support. For example, in the days after the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks, hundreds of young Iranians held candlelight vigils to mourn the attacks’ victims and to express solidarity with the United States.<sup>23</sup> This outpouring of support by young Iranians is in contrast to the events of 25 years ago, when radical students held American diplomats hostage in Tehran, and it reveals a people far friendlier to the West than their unelected government.

## Iran’s Influence in Iraq

With little support at home, Iran’s regime is building influence in Iraq by developing ties with mainstream political figures and, some officials allege, by supporting anti-coalition insurgents. It is rumored that Iran has provided assistance to Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani, to Ahmed Chalabi, and to Shiite political parties like the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq and the Dawa Party.<sup>24</sup> Also, in predominantly Shiite southern Iraq, Iran is devoting its aid dollars to highly visible projects, such as building health clinics, community centers, and power generators, while American aid, which focuses mainly on rebuilding infrastructure, is less apparent to ordinary Iraqis.<sup>25</sup> Although these efforts challenge American influence only indirectly, they nevertheless implicitly present Iranian leadership—and, therefore, Iranian values—as an alternative.

Iran may be complementing this indirect challenge with a more direct one: support for Iraqi insurgents. Various sources, including Donald Rumsfeld, have accused Iran of secretly backing anti-American cleric Moqtada al-Sadr,<sup>26</sup> who leads a militia that fought with coalition troops throughout this past April and May. More broadly, the former head of the National Council of Resistance, which exposed Iran’s Natanz and Arak nuclear facilities, accuses Iran of backing the Iraqi insurgency with heavy financial assistance, manpower, and inflammatory clerics.<sup>27</sup> But there is reason to doubt some of these accusations. In May, Army Brigadier General Mark Kimmitt, the top military spokesman in Baghdad, said that Sadr’s militia is not Iranian-backed, manned, or controlled.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, even though Sadr may enjoy the support of Iranian hardliners, backing him represents a risky strategy for Iran with respect to both its relationship with the United States and its relationship with Iraqi Shiites, among whom Sadr is far less popular than Sistani. Ultimately, there is too little known evidence to determine whether these risks deterred Iran from backing Sadr, but Iran’s actions have clearly demonstrated its intention to gain significant influence in the new Iraq. Indeed, coupled with its nuclear ambitions, those actions may reflect an Iranian aspiration to be the region’s predominant power.

Throughout the past year, Iranian Revolutionary Guard troops have crossed into Iraq to the north and east of Basra and set up posts reportedly in an attempt to reclaim territories lost to Iraq

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<sup>23</sup> *New Yorker*, “Shadow Land: Who’s Winning the Fight for Iran’s Future?” February 18, 2002.

<sup>24</sup> *Washington Post*, “U.S. Wary as Iran Works to Increase Influence in Iraq,” June 12, 2004.

<sup>25</sup> *Washington Post*, June 12, 2004.

<sup>26</sup> *The Economist*, “Tetchy Neighbors,” April 24, 2004.

<sup>27</sup> *Associated Press*, “U.S., Experts Try to Sort Out What Role Iran is Playing in Iraq,” May 11, 2004.

<sup>28</sup> *Associated Press*.

during the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq war.<sup>29</sup> In recent weeks, it has been reported that Iran is massing thousands of troops on the Iraqi border.<sup>30</sup>

## **Iran's Suppression of Democracy and Human Rights**

This past February, the Council of Guardians—the seat of power of Iran's unelected religious hardliners—seized the upper hand in its struggle with reformists by disqualifying 2,500 reformist candidates, including 87 incumbents, from participating in parliamentary elections on the grounds that they are indifferent to Islam and the constitution and opposed to the virtually unlimited power of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. With the coalition of reformist parties calling for boycotts of the election, conservatives reclaimed a majority in Iran's parliament, winning about 155 of 290 seats<sup>31</sup> with only 50-percent voter turnout – the lowest in a general election since 1979.<sup>32</sup>

The decline in voter turnout may signal Iranians' despair at the reformists' inability to enact actual reforms since winning control of parliament in 2000. Although parliament has, in recent years, passed legislation to liberalize the press, to expand trial by jury, to sign the United Nations bans on torture and sex discrimination, and to stop police from storming universities, the Council of Guardians has vetoed each measure.<sup>33</sup> The Council has been equally intolerant of the press. Since 2001, it has banned more than 120 reformist newspapers and detained more than 50 journalists and editors, making it, in the words of Reporters Without Borders, “the biggest prison for journalists in the Middle East.”<sup>34</sup> Reformists, including Khatami, have been powerless to stop the hardliners' assault on the liberties of ordinary Iranians, and this impotence has fueled the disillusionment with reformists among Iranians that low voter turnouts reflect. In the long run, however, hard-line measures such as February's election manipulation may turn Iranians' anger away from the reformists and toward the already unpopular clerical regime.

## **Policy Options: What to Do About Iran?**

Already, both the Bush Administration and Congress have taken measures to oppose Iran's nuclear program, support for terrorism, and suppression of democracy and human rights. On the nuclear front, the Administration has pursued a multilateral approach, working with allies to attempt to persuade individual governments and international bodies to firmly oppose Iran's nuclear weapons ambitions. Results have been mixed.

In June 2003, the Administration secured agreements from the European Union and G8 that they would not tolerate Iran's nuclear violations, and all parties reaffirmed this position during meetings this past June. In May 2003, the administration, together with 10 other countries, inaugurated the Proliferation Security Initiative, a program aimed at stemming WMD proliferation by interdicting shipments of WMD materials and technology destined for hostile countries. Since its inauguration, the PSI has gained the support of dozens of countries and has been critical in getting

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<sup>29</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, “Attack Iran, U.S. Chief Ordered British,” June 30, 2004.

<sup>30</sup> UPI, “Iran Massing Troops on Iraq Border,” June 15, 2004.

<sup>31</sup> CRS, “Iran: U.S. Concerns and Policy Responses.” CRS Report for Congress, June 8, 2004.

<sup>32</sup> *Economist.com*, “A Sorry Election,” February 23, 2004.

<sup>33</sup> *The Economist*, February 23, 2004.

<sup>34</sup> Reporters Without Borders, “Annual Report on Iran,” May 4, 2004.



Libya to abandon its pursuit of WMD and in exposing the nuclear black-market network run by Pakistan's A.Q. Khan.<sup>35</sup>

The broadening of support for the PSI and the firm opposition by the United States, European Union, and G8 to Iran's nuclear violations represent critical steps toward restraining Iran's nuclear drive. As Undersecretary Bolton said, "The world has put Iran on notice that it must stop pursuing nuclear weapons."<sup>36</sup>

While condemning the nuclear violations of Iran's government, the administration has also made clear its support for the democratic aspirations of the Iranian people. President Bush stated, "The people of Iran want the same freedoms, human rights, and opportunities as people around the world. Their government should listen to their hopes," and that "as Iran's people move towards a future defined by greater freedom, greater tolerance, they will have no better friend than the United States of America."<sup>37</sup> More recently, following last February's parliamentary elections in Iran, in which thousands of reformist candidates were disqualified, administration officials declared that "these actions do not represent free and fair elections"<sup>38</sup> and that, "We continue to believe the Iranian people deserve a government that responds to their aspirations."<sup>39</sup>

Congress has echoed these views. In February, the Senate passed a resolution (S.Res. 304) condemning Iran's parliamentary elections as "neither free nor fair" and calling for the United States "to advocate a democratic government in Iran that will restore freedom to the people of Iran, will abandon terrorism, will protect human rights, and will live in peace and security with the international community."

Currently, Congress is considering numerous other bills and resolutions that express support for democratic reform in Iran and condemn the Iranian government's human rights abuses, terrorism sponsorship, and nuclear violations.<sup>40</sup>

With regard to democracy and human rights, there are two bills — the Iran Democracy Act (S.1082) and the Iran Freedom and Democracy Support Act (H.R. 2466) — that the Senate and House, respectively, are considering. These bills would make it U.S. policy to "support transparent, full democracy in Iran." They would require the U.S. government to increase U.S. television and radio programming to Iran and would authorize the State Department to fund persons or groups who use radio or television broadcasts to Iran to promote a democratic referendum there. The House version also would ban imports of Iranian food or textiles to the U.S. until Iran improves its human rights record, ceases its support for terrorism, and terminates its nuclear weapons programs. By passing some version of these bills, Congress will improve the United States' ability to reach the Iranian people with a message of support, solidarity, and hope.

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<sup>35</sup> Undersecretary of State John Bolton, "The Bush Administration's Forward Strategy for Nonproliferation." Address to the American Enterprise Institute, June 24, 2004.

<sup>36</sup> Undersecretary of State John Bolton. Testimony before the House International Relations Committee on U.S. Nonproliferation Policy after Iraq, *Federal News Service*, June 4, 2004.

<sup>37</sup> President George W. Bush, "Statement by the President," July 12, 2002. [www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/07/print/20020712-9.html](http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/07/print/20020712-9.html).

<sup>38</sup> *The Washington Post*, "In Partial Results, Conservatives Poised to Win Iran's Parliament," February 22, 2004.

<sup>39</sup> *The Associated Press*, "Iran reformers blast parliament vote as 'historic fiasco;' conservatives take control," February 23, 2004.

<sup>40</sup> H.Res.59, H.Res.140, S.Res.81, H.Res.501, S.Con.Res.73.

With regard to the nuclear issue, on July 22, the Senate passed S. Con. Res. 81, which expressed Congress' deep concern over the Islamic Republic of Iran's developing capabilities to produce nuclear weapons. Among its many provisions, the resolution called on all nations that are party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), including the United States, to use appropriate means to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons until Iran meets its obligations. It also urged the United Nations Security Council, immediately upon receiving a report from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) regarding continuing Iranian noncompliance with its obligations, to take action that may be necessary under Articles 39 through 41 of the Charter of the United Nations.

The Bush administration must get more help from our European allies to convince the Iranian government that its nuclear violations are intolerable. It appears that Iran is not serious about honoring its commitments to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and its subsequent assurances to the IAEA. Unfortunately, France, Germany, and the Britain have frequently been reluctant to press for tougher U.N. action against Iran, thus showing less than a unified front with the United States in addressing Iran's transgressions. Such actions have spurred the *Washington Post* to dub Europe's approach toward Iran as "feckless."<sup>41</sup>

To force Iran to abide by these commitments, the United States and its allies may pursue a number of policy options, including:

- Pressing for the September 2004 IAEA Board of Governors meeting to pass a resolution declaring that Iran has violated its IAEA obligations and to refer this noncompliance to the U.N. Security Council.
- Seeking a U.N. Security Council resolution formally condemning Iran's destabilizing noncompliance.
- Working with its allies, the administration should employ the Administration's Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) to interdict nuclear weapons and ballistic missile components destined for Iran.
- Working with the European Union (EU) to ensure that the EU's policy of "constructive engagement" with Iran is conducive to promoting democracy there and to getting the Iranian government to cease its human rights abuses, nuclear violations, and terrorism sponsorship. In particular, the Bush Administration should encourage the EU to stand firmly by its refusal to sign a major trade deal with the Iranian government until it improves its record on human rights, terrorism, and nuclear transparency.<sup>42</sup>
- Increasing and improving U.S. television and radio programming (through the International Broadcasting Bureau) to Iran.

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<sup>41</sup> *Washington Post*, editorial, "Failed Preemption," June 18, 2004.

<sup>42</sup> *Iran Press Service*. "EU Accuses Iran of Gross Violations of Human Rights," June 20, 2004.

- Finally, the United States, in conjunction with the EU and Japan, who are major trading partners with Iran, should consider levying — and enforcing — multilateral sanctions against Iran.

These policies reflect a strategy aimed at supporting the democratic aspirations of the Iranian people while thwarting the nuclear ambitions of their tyrannical regime. This strategy represents a viable approach to a regime that, while arguably close to collapse, appears poised to acquire the world's most dangerous weapons. Responsible members of the international community must not wait for the threat of Iran's WMD programs to mature before trying to stop it. The United States, in partnership with its allies and others, must neutralize this threat while it is still emerging and demand transparency and accountability from Iran. The risks to international peace and security are too great to act otherwise.

## Conclusion

There may be reasonable hope that, in the near future, Iran's hard-line theocracy will fall and in its place a liberal democracy will arise. In the meantime, that hard-line regime gravely threatens global peace and security. It is a supremely dangerous nexus between terrorism and WMD, and should Iran acquire a nuclear weapon, it will be able to export terrorism with even greater impunity. Such a regime represents a great danger to American values and to American interests in the Middle East, which now include cultivating a liberal democracy in Iraq.

As foreign policy analyst Ilan Berman has written, "Iran is exploiting U.S. preoccupation with Iraq to build the capabilities that will establish its hegemony in its immediate neighborhood and enhance its role across the Middle East. Iran's moves, if left unchecked, will create a grave and growing challenge to U.S. aims in the Middle East."<sup>43</sup> The United States may continue trying to monitor and restrain Iran's nuclear program with international inspections, it may try to destroy Iran's nuclear program militarily, or it may even resign itself to a nuclear Iran and refocus its efforts on replacing the current regime with a pro-Western, democratic one. In any case, America's Iran policy must reflect its determination to, as the President phrased it, "keep the world's most dangerous weapons out of the hands of the world's most dangerous regimes."<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Ilan Berman, "How to Tame Tehran," *Middle East Quarterly*, Spring 2004.

<sup>44</sup> George W. Bush, "State of the Union Address," January 20, 2004.